

42nd Infantry Division M.O.R.S.

Mobile Ordnance Repair Shops in World War I The First Contact Truck

by Karl L. Rubis, *Ordnance Branch Historian, US Army Ordnance School*

As the United States entered World War I, it was apparent it would require the largest American Army in history. In line with the exponential growth of the US Army, the Ordnance Department mushroomed in size. On April 1, 1917, the Ordnance Department numbered 97 Officers and 1,241 Enlisted Men. By the end of WWI, there were 5,954 Officers and 62,047 Enlisted Men.¹

At the advent of the American entry into World War I, the concept of a mobile repair unit had just been established. Due to the American experience in the 1916 Punitive Expedition, the Ordnance Department recognized the need for an established form of forward mobile maintenance system. "Unserviceable equipment should be stopped in its progress to the rear and returned to a serviceable condition at the earliest possible stage."² It was clear that a much more developed mobile ordnance repair unit would be necessary for the American Army in WWI.

Organization and Movement

The 3rd Mobile Ordnance Repair Shop (M.O.R.S.), part of the Third Division, and the 103rd M.O.R.S., attached to the Twenty-Eighth Division, have a history characteristic of the organization, training, and overseas responsibilities of an M.O.R.S. unit. By the end of WWI, there would be 25 M.O.R.S. in operation.³

M.O.R.S. units were organized stateside. Following induction, Soldiers were interviewed to determine who were best suited for certain jobs based on their previous civilian experience before they were sent

to the appropriate school. The Twenty-Eighth Division selected 45 soldiers to attend the "various ordnance, saddler, machine gun, and artillery schools."⁴ Due to the burgeoning numbers of Ordnance Soldiers, the Ordnance Department established schools at a variety of its current locations (arsenals, depots, etc...), and expanded into civilian organizations including factories and colleges.⁵ However, by the end of the war, training was consolidated at Camp Hancock, Ga. The 103rd M.O.R.S. was established in the fall of 1917 at Camp Hancock, Ga. The 3rd M.O.R.S. was organized at Chicamauga Park, Georgia on February 15, 1918.

Before departure to France, M.O.R.S. units were typically staffed according to the TO&E. The 3rd M.O.R.S. and the 103rd M.O.R.S. deployed overseas with 3 Officers and 45 Enlisted Men. Each M.O.R.S. was broken into an Equipment Section and Machinery Section. The Equipment Section focused on small arms and consisted of three repair trucks and two supply trucks. The Machinery Section addressed artillery repairs and possessed three artillery repair trucks and three supply trucks. Some units included motorcycles with sidecars to affect quick, emergency repairs.

The 3rd M.O.R.S. departed for France on March 16, shortly following its organization and arrived at its training area at Camp Co-

etquidan on April 8.⁶ However, not every M.O.R.S. unit quickly deployed to France. The 103rd M.O.R.S. spent considerable time stateside before it left the United States, and its journey to France proved circuitous. After being ordered to support the divisional supply train for the first part of 1918, it left Camp Hancock on May 13, 1918. It arrived at Liverpool, England on May 31. Next was a series of rail trips, foot marches, and ferry rides across England and France which brought them to the Ordnance training center at Is-sur-Tille, near Dijon, on June 16, approximately nine months following its organization.⁷ Follow-on training in France was not uncommon. The 103rd M.O.R.S. conducted training at Is-sur-Tille on artillery, machine guns, automatic rifles, and other small arms.

M.O.R.S. in Combat

Division histories reveal that M.O.R.S. units faced significant challenges in combat. In France, the mission of the M.O.R.S. was to act as a division asset to repair ordnance equipment as close to the front line as possible. This brought them under enemy fire and forced them to adapt to battlefield conditions. At any given time there was a shortage of vehicles to move the unit forward, sometimes it had to wait until it could borrow vehicles or convert other types of vehicles into repair trucks suitable for operation with an M.O.R.S. unit. Staffing could also fluctuate depending on the circumstances.

On October 6, the 3rd M.O.R.S. moved forward to Montfaucon. It attempted to set up shop, but found no suitable location free of constant enemy fire and direct observation. Consequently, the unit fell back to Frana Farm, but it left a forward detachment halfway between Montfaucon and Frana Farm. It was located within walking distance of the units and staffed by one officer in charge of an Equipment Section and Machinery Section. Each section had three Ordnance sergeants and two privates. This location operated as a first-aid station for all types of Ordnance equipment in the division. As much as possible, it repaired small arms and artillery equipment and returned it to its unit. However, if a piece of equipment needed more extensive repair, it was sent back to Frana Farm on the daily truck runs between the two locations. This forward first-aid station operated in this manner through the rest of the war.⁸

The 103rd M.O.R.S. also experienced a change in their size which would last until the end of the war. On August 19, the unit arrived at St. Gemme and received 18 pieces of captured German artillery to repair. It affected the repairs and returned the artillery to the line to be used in conjunction with the large quantity of German ammunition captured by the division. To do this, men from the 103rd Ammunition Train and other specialists from other units, such as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and welders were transferred to the 103rd M.O.R.S. This enlarged M.O.R.S. comprised 4 Officers and 88 enlisted men.⁹

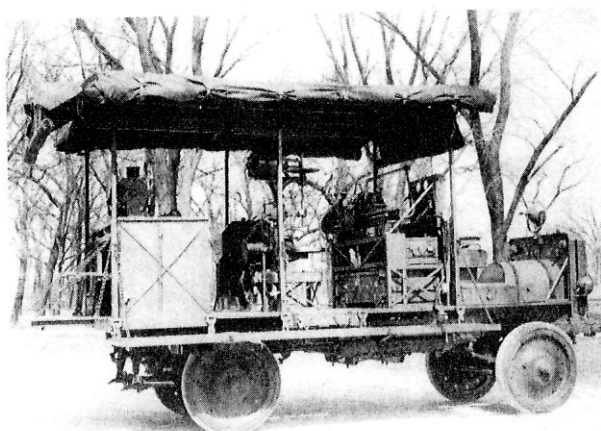
Accomplishments

Despite the challenges it encountered, the success of the M.O.R.S. units in WWI was widely recognized. The various units developed the methods to conduct maintenance as close to the line as possible. Through the use of equipment inspections, Ordnance personnel were able to maintain or increase the operational life of equipment. M.O.R.S. units refurbished captured equipment to be turned on its previous owners. It operated a rudimentary replacement system by maintaining a stock of weapons and equipment to replace damaged material. It provided parts and lubricants as far forward to the line as possible to service materiel.¹⁰

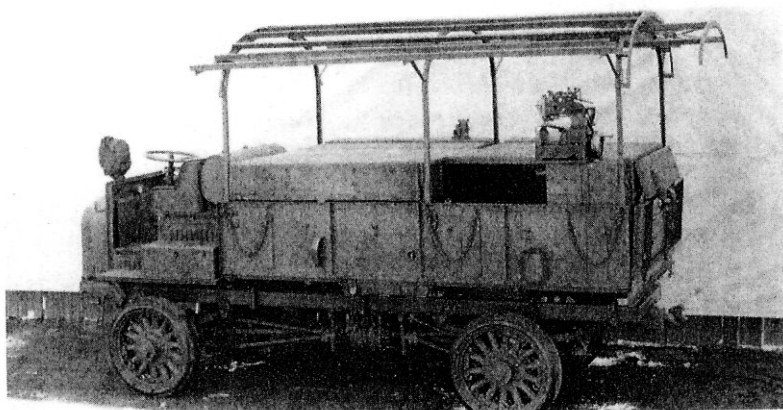
The statistics reveal their capability with not only American weapons, but also British, French, and German.¹¹ By the end of the war, the 3rd M.O.R.S. had repaired 607 machine guns, 1811 rifles, 829 Chauchat Automatic Rifles, and 923 pistols. In addition, it repaired 179 French 75mm and 85 French 155mm artillery pieces.¹²

Due to its increased size, the 103rd M.O.R.S. repaired even more equipment. It repaired 4,878 Springfield and Enfield rifles, 176 Chauchat Automatic Rifles, 1,000 Colt pistols and revolvers, and 143 Hotchkiss machine guns. Additionally, it repaired 67 French 75mm and 23 French 155mm artillery pieces. The 103rd M.O.R.S. repaired a large amount of captured German equipment as well, including repairs on 69 rifles and pistols, 34 German Maxim machine guns, and 16 artillery pieces.¹³

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M.O.R.S. Artillery Repair Truck



M.O.R.S. Equipment Repair Truck

M.O.R.S. continued from page 17

Following the armistice, the 3rd M.O.R.S. continued to be a part of the 3rd Division and participated in occupation duty in Germany and carried out the various Ordnance related duties tasked to it. The 103rd M.O.R.S. returned with the 28th Division to Camp Dix, N.J. and was mustered out on May 8, 1919. 🐼

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— ENDNOTES —

Mobile Ordnance Repair Shops in World War I

1. Ordnance Department Pamphlet No. 1864, Ordnance Schools During the Period of the War, 1919, p. 5.
2. Ordnance Department Pamphlet No. 1823, Notes on Ordnance Field Service, July 1, 1917, p. 11.
3. *Reports of Commander-in-Chief, A.E.F., Staff Sections and Services, United States Army in the World War 1917-1919*. Historical Division, Department of the Army, Washington D.C., 1948.
4. *The Twenty-Eighth Division in the World War: Pennsylvania's Guards*, Edited by E.S. Wallace, A.M. D.D., Compiled by Colonel Edward Martin. 28th Division Publishing Co. Pittsburgh, Pa. p. 439.
5. Ordnance Department Pamphlet No. 1864, Ordnance Schools During the Period of the War, 1919, p. 6.
6. *History of the Third Division, United States Army in The World War for the period December 1, 1917 to January 1, 1919*. Frederic Vinton Hemenway, Division Historian. p. 332.
7. *The Twenty-Eighth Division in the World War: Pennsylvania's Guards*, Edited by E.S. Wallace, A.M. D.D., Compiled by Colonel Edward Martin. 28th Division Publishing Co. Pittsburgh, Pa. p. 439.
8. *History of the Third Division, United States Army in The World War for the period December 1, 1917 to January 1, 1919*. Frederic Vinton Hemenway, Division Historian. p. 335.
9. *The Twenty-Eighth Division in the World War: Pennsylvania's Guards*, Edited by E.S. Wallace, A.M. D.D., Compiled by Colonel Edward Martin. 28th Division Publishing Co. Pittsburgh, Pa. p. 442.
10. These generalizations are based upon divisional histories and experiences of the 3rd M.O.R.S. and the 103rd M.O.R.S.
11. *Reports of Commander-in-Chief, A.E.F., Staff Sections and Services, United States Army in the World War 1917-1919*. Historical Division, Department of the Army, Washington D.C., 1948. p. 84.
12. *History of the Third Division, United States Army in The World War for the period December 1, 1917 to January 1, 1919*. Frederic Vinton Hemenway, Division Historian. p. 336.
13. *The Twenty-Eighth Division in the World War: Pennsylvania's Guards*, Edited by E.S. Wallace, A.M. D.D., Compiled by Colonel Edward Martin. 28th Division Publishing Co. Pittsburgh, Pa. p. 443.

Ammunition Surveillance Operations for 89B 30/40 QA/QC Ammunition Inspector Pilot Course

by Randy M. Stephens

The Spring of 2012 will begin with an interesting and challenging training opportunity for the 89B 30/40 Ammunition Specialist. The Ordnance School, in collaboration with the Defense Ammunition Center (DAC), will conduct an 89B Ammunition Inspector Certification/Training Course April 2 through May 16, 2012 at Fort Hood, Texas.

In early 2011, the need was identified for a trained Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Ammunition Inspector in support to the combat commander in the area of Explosive Safety and tactical ammunition operations during wartime. Over the years due to multiple realignments of the Ammunition Specialist Military Occupational Speciality (MOS), a loss of expertise had diminished for the Ammunition Inspector duties, resulting in a major degradation of ammunition surveillance skills, including Explosive Safety, Munitions Inspection Process and Field and Tactical ammunition operations. To date, there is no constructive training to prepare an ammunition NCO to perform the critical tasks of QA/QC in support of today's munitions environment.

As an integral part of the Ordnance Campaign Plan, the "Ammunition Surveillance Operations for 89B QA/QC" Course has been created. The pilot course will consist of Ammunition Soldiers from the 664th OD Company, and other III Corps units at Fort Hood, Texas. The course consists of a 32-hour distance learning (DL) requirement, an 80-hour classroom instruction phase, followed by four weeks of on-site training conducted at the Fort Hood Ammunition Supply Point (ASP). The pilot course will compliment and align training and the development of Program(s) of Instruction (POI's). It will update and introduce changes within the Advance Leader and Senior Leader Course (ALC/SLC). The focus of the training will be to teach the Soldier to successfully execute a range of critical tasks using skills based training. The training will incorporate critical tasks and align with the Soldier's mission allowing them to fulfill their expected duties as a QA/QC ammunition inspector. Ultimately, the goal will be to refocus POI's and tasks taught in the 89B ALC/SLC to concentrate on tasks required in tactical/deployed environment. With the follow on certification training with the DAC, the 89B NCO will be able to perform inspections for serviceable or un-serviceable condition of ammunition and perform duties as a QA/QC ammunition inspector. The pilot program will be a beginning for a highly trained, competent, 89B NCO providing first class munitions support. 🐼

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